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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: INDEPENDENT EDITORS LAUNCH FORUM

- ¶1. Editors of five privately-owned mainstream newspapers have launched a national editors' forum "to promote and defend press freedom and free speech" in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe National Editor's Forum (ZINEF) was launched on June 12 by editors Geoff Nyarota of "The Daily News," Francis Mdlongwa of the weekly "The Financial Gazette," Iden Wetherell of the weekly "Zimbabwe Independent," Bornwell Chakaodza of the "The Sunday Standard," and Chiza Ngwira, editor of the monthly magazine "Parade."
- ¶2. ZINEF's self-described mission is to challenge laws that threaten media freedom and freedom of expression, and to encourage the government to ensure transparency, openness and accountability in public administration.
- ¶3. Meanwhile, an article carried in the June 13 edition of the "Financial Gazette," reports that the independent media in Zimbabwe are preparing to take the government to court to challenge sections of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA). The move comes two days before a government deadline for the registration of media organizations. Under AIPPA, no newspaper, radio or television station, advertising agency or journalist will be allowed to operate after June 16 unless they are registered with or accredited by the Media and Information Commission. However, the Media Commission has not yet set up registration or accreditation processes, and Chairman Tafataona Mahoso has said that the Commission will not take immediate action against unregistered media organizations or journalists.

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